

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 3, 2009

CARPINTERIA CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT AUGMENTATION

File No. 03-021-04
Project Manager: Rachel Couch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to augment the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Restoration: Bliss and Cate School Fish Passage Improvement project with \$220,000 from the Arroyo Hondo Steelhead Passage Enhancement project, both previously authorized by the Conservancy.

LOCATION: Santa Barbara County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Integrated Marine and Coastal Resources Enhancement

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [June 2006 Staff Recommendation - Arroyo Hondo \(without exhibits\)](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [June 2005 and September 2008 Staff Recommendations - Carpinteria Creek \(without exhibits\)](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [Project Site Map and Photos](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31220 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the augmentation of the previously authorized Carpinteria Creek Watershed Restoration: Bliss and Cate School Fish Passage Improvement project by redirecting up to two hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$220,000) from the previously authorized Arroyo Hondo Steelhead Passage Enhancement project.

Prior to commencement of construction and to disbursement of these Conservancy funds, the Land Trust shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:

1. A revised work program, project budget and timeline.

2. The names and qualifications of any contractors or subcontractors that the Land Trust intends to employ to construct the project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The Carpinteria Creek project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31220 regarding watershed restoration.
2. The Carpinteria project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s June 16, 2005 and September 2008 resolutions, findings, and staff reports, attached as Exhibit 3, except as indicated in the current staff report.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed authorization would redirect up to \$220,000 granted to the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County (LTSBC) for habitat restoration at Arroyo Hondo Creek in Santa Barbara County to habitat enhancement of Carpinteria Creek, also in Santa Barbara County. The LTSBC will work with Earth Island Institute (EII) to complete the Carpinteria Creek project. Both projects were previously authorized by the Conservancy.

Specifically, the redirected funds will be used at Carpinteria Creek to address severe bank erosion through installation of a biotechnical bank stabilization component at the Cate School site, and to complete revegetation around two bridges, as needed, at the Cate School and Bliss sites, respectively, installed in 2008 to facilitate anadromous fish passage (See Exhibit 4).

Like Arroyo Hondo Creek, Carpinteria Creek presents outstanding opportunities for enhancing steelhead habitat in southern Santa Barbara County. While two fish passage barriers have been removed as part of the Carpinteria Creek project, a funding shortfall prevented the completion of key biotechnical bank stabilization and revegetation elements. Numerous permitting delays, bridge costs exceeding estimates, and unanticipated costs related to permit conditions and construction were responsible for the funding shortfall.

SITE DESCRIPTION

For site description of the Carpinteria Creek project site, see the Conservancy’s June 2005 staff report (Exhibit 3).

PROJECT HISTORY:

In June 2006, the Conservancy authorized funds to improve fish passage in Arroyo Hondo Creek by modifying the concrete culvert under Highway 101 and creating an expanded and stable lagoon by removing a concrete box channel. Modification of the culvert was completed in 2008, along with habitat enhancements and erosion control measures immediately upstream of the project. The lagoon enhancement component was scaled back because agreement could not be

reached with Caltrans and Union Pacific Railroad regarding design and liability. A portion of the resulting excess funds was redirected to enhance upstream habitat in the Arroyo Hondo Creek watershed by the Conservancy on September 25, 2008. This upstream phase of the project is now in progress.

In June 2005, the Conservancy authorized funds to implement habitat improvement projects at two locations (the Bliss and Cate properties) along Carpinteria Creek to improve steelhead migration and habitat. In 2008, two Arizona crossings (fish barriers) were removed and two new bridges were installed. Because of permitting delays, the actual cost of the bridges at the time of installation exceeded the previously received bids. Unanticipated costs associated with permit conditions and mitigation measures contributed to additional project cost overruns. Lastly, mobilization costs for machinery and equipment, originally budgeted to be shared with the bridge construction component, must now be incurred separately.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Carpinteria Creek Project

Bank Stabilization Phase:

Coastal Conservancy (augmentation)	\$220,000
Previously Authorized	\$510,000
Other funds secured	\$846,082
Total Project Cost	\$1,576,082

The Carpinteria Creek project funding remains consistent with the Conservancy's June 2005 and September 2008 staff reports (Exhibit 3).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The Carpinteria Creek project is consistent with Chapter 5.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Section 31220 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code regarding integrated coastal and marine resources protection. Section 31220(a) authorizes the Conservancy to undertake and award grants for projects that meet one or more criteria of Section 31220(b). Consistent with 31220(b), the proposed project aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) protects or restores fish and wildlife habitat within coastal and marine waters and coastal watersheds by reducing and impediment to fish passage; 2) reduces unnatural erosion and sedimentation of coastal watersheds through stream bank stabilization. Section 31220(c) requires that projects funded under Section 31220 be consistent with the Integrated Watershed Program established under Section 30947, local watershed management plans, if available, and waters quality control plans adopted by the State Water Resources Control Board and regional waters quality control boards; and include a monitoring and evaluation component. As stated in the June 2005 staff report (Exhibit 3), the Carpinteria Creek project is consistent with the *Carpinteria Creek Watershed Plan* (March 2005) and the Water Quality Control Plan for the

Central Coastal Basin (adopted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region in 1994 and reviewed every three years). In addition, the project includes a monitoring and evaluation component as required by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Community-based Habitat Restoration Partnership Program.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Consistent with Goal 5, Objectives B, C, and D of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will enhance coastal aquatic and riparian habitat in the Carpinteria watershed by reducing erosion and sedimentation; the project will restore a wildlife corridor from coastal to inland habitat areas improving habitat for steelhead trout; and the project will remove invasive non native plant species and will plant native species to prevent invasive species from becoming re-established.

Consistent with Goal 6 Objective B, the proposed project will preserve and restore a coastal watershed thereby improving habitat for anadromous steelhead trout.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S SELECTION CRITERIA

The Carpinteria Creek project was found consistent with Conservancy project selection criteria when originally approved. A new project selection criterion was adopted June 4, 2009 pertaining to project vulnerability due to sea-level rise. The new sea-level rise criterion is not applicable to the proposed project because the project sites lie over two miles inland from the ocean and is unlikely to be impacted by sea level rise.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed authorization to redirect funds does not have the potential to result in any physical changes to the environment and therefore is not a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act, as provided in 14 California Code of Regulation Section 15378.

The project being funded remains consistent with the Conservancy's June 2005 staff report (Exhibit 3). There have been no significant changes to the environment or project description.